

LIGHTSTREAMINGS

A POEM

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Authors's Note: *Lightstreamings* is the first volume of a long poem in four parts, of which *Possession*, *Tenebrae* and *Second World* are the second, third, and last parts respectively. The entire work is called *Second World: A Life*.

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LIGHTSTREAMINGS

This sunny breeze
the white lace curtain
fills
then falls

This moment
of warm breeze
of warmth and light

I lie beside you
having one thought only

A rhythm an impulse
a process

felt continuity
completely realized
at last

this
has led me here

And therefore I enter light and warmth
your skin is warm

and has its own soft light

as though

the sunny breeze
which is both light

and air

had taken form

a warmth I enter and a light I touch

I wait for when the curtain

next will fill

and then fall back

A woman

a warm breeze

A breath

I sat there

by the window that afternoon

the day was hot and bright

harsh blue of sky

noon heat's shimmer on the street

a glare of yellow

spokes of sunlight

shifting through the treetop

in the leaves there was a stippling glare of sun

and it was burning the tree
and the treetop was swaying

in the afternoon's hot dry breeze

I sat there thinking

in that place
that afternoon that time

deep the center
within

subsistence breathing

within

the center

I thought

myself

as myself

and

there was a clarity

like the clarity of light

no more the darkness of a child

a space opened

gradually

had already

light to think of it as? as time?

as day

No longer I I merely yet I

still and still still

I watched waited

looking seeing

visibility itself seeing it

time space

space-light

radiant there

treetop moving

wind sound in the leaves

Blue sky

Now

and then

just now

it is

it was

is

it

no word

now

There was no

And yet

Word

spoken somewhere

in some movement

Within what often speaks

Something beneath movement

though not really

not that

thought perhaps language self not
self still

blue enigma sky

green enigma earth

memory

But the spring is

the season of new present

the purple lilac laden near the fence

wavers in the wind

just newly mild

that sight

not an enigma
but experience of fact see it there

luminous in day time-space light

So rich that lilac color almost blue

clusters of light purple
against the bright white shingles of the house
that glare in the morning sun

on the line white sheets still damp
flap in the breeze like sails

The breeze comes from the north
and brings the feel of activity
although the air's still cool
and there is a sharpness

a clarity everywhere

The air is clean and bright
the sun a hard bright light
unmixed with too much warmth

And so in this moment of spring brightness

the crisp breeze flapping the white sheet
that dries in the sun slowly
and grows just noticeably warm to the touch
as noon comes on

and yet the air still has its edge of cold

In a time

that is both cool and warm
upon the skin

we move about in the bright sunlight
and fresh air

And in the running light
we sail off to where?

This activity in the air
and breathing

and in the mind thought

visibility itself

for moving in clean air

I breathe the scent
of earth so deeply in

now risen up again

fragrance of damp earth

countless the scent of flowers

of mud and grass and rain

the unpredictable dissemination renewal
in the air

and in each breath

and in the mind as well

the sources open and we move through them
in this moment of sunlight

and of spring

warmth

in this instant

this breath of time

they cannot close

Sources underground
washed by rain
that trickles through the soil
the run-off water
at the first spring thaw
and later when the March and April rains
have soaked the soil through
the buds of the earth flush
open
to the running streams
the rain
activity
a kind of warmth
as roots of trees
the complicated
roots
ganglia of earthen threads respond
and tubers move from sleep

I drift in the night
in the waters of the night
which are my sleep
which are
the waters of energy moving through
stillness
like sound across still water
almost infinite echo after echo
ripples moving outward on a pond
concentrically

for when one dreams one listens
dreaming is listening

But to what?

what is it that you hear?

what is it moving upward through plateaus of water

through the roots of earth

subterranean sources

depths and darkness of the body itself

to move within the corridors of mind
that is no longer mind and not yet mind

neither of body nor of mind

this energy this source
although within each breath

it can be felt
and heard

as with
an ear against the ground

or heard as

music in the mind is heard silently
felt music

Now stand and

feel each breath
an inner power pressed

downward

to your stomach through your legs
to some deep point within the earth

That is how deep you go

and upward likewise

the heart the egress of the throat
the processes of thought

the center of a sphere
of many spheres moving outward to

the edges of the horizon
This is the measure of how far
how deep you go

the depths
the extensions
the realms
to which you must respond
which must respond to you
even if not in kind

With rain
and whipping leaves
and the random energy of wind
the summer storm declares itself
moving through the night outside
The tops of the trees sway
moments of a force that moves
through them
in currents gathered from minute events
accumulating power

with being
and with thought

Thought and each thought
or even each thing I see
a seed

which blossoms finally
in dreams
And so it is that thoughts arise in me
through mingling
of self and world of mind and world
of body and the hazards of the world

And from this mingling the seed of dreams

And so I listening to the sound
which is my dream
(and
is it many voices?

What do I hear?)
attempt to know the world by what it gives – dreams,
and the fact dreamed

We bought a quart of cherries that afternoon
And sat out in the arbor behind the garage
Eating them and talking

the sun was bright
But a cool breeze blew across us through the leaves
and latticework

just every now and then

Washed and in a metal bowl
they shined just faintly
almost imperceptibly
but brilliant if you looked

Glossy and wet deep red the very darkest red
almost like black
they shone with a kind of dark light
in the arbor's darkness

The splendor of something alien
if only for a moment

How firm they were to the touch
a tough resilient minutely veined inside
torn in the teeth and bleeding its red blood
almost like human blood

although it's sweet not salty
has no affinity with tears
is too thin to clot and has no need to

You took one then bit into it
and then spit out the pit
then stared at the open half there in your hand
your face was partly hidden in green shadows
but your hair was touched with the yellow and gold
sunlight
that threw its checker work
on the green picnic table
and on the brown scuffed dirt and on the grass
and then I took one too

a beauty which is a very delicate surface
dark red and wet and pebbly
like the inside of an eyelid

if only for a moment

moment
of this process

as I likewise must

Shadows among shadows

the leaves are ragged woven

black shapes
fluttering
in the occasional breeze

We lie here together
we two alone
and no one knows we're here

I will enter you head to foot
and you
will accept
contain encompass become

What you had lacked before
I will become what I had lacked

Shadows over shadows over
shadows
interpenetrate transformed transfigured

Transformed
momentarily the pulse is touched
the life is motivated

Outside the night moves silently about
outside the breeze moves in the night

Leaves flutter in the occasional breeze
the stars are so bright so many and so clear
detailed precise

There are so many stars
amid the shadows
which are powers
presences moving through the night
you sense them know them hear them
and the night is made of them

Shadows over shadows

and many innumerable stars the stars you see
and those which have gone dark

What better place for thinking than an arbor?

It's not for nothing that they say
one's thoughts turn green in a green shade
or might perhaps

If one were quiet enough and calm
and maybe shrewd as well
enough to put all sense of loss away disquiet

and remorse reflection remembrance time

the jagged shrapnel the sharp shards of glass
which are the elements of pain

if they are picked out of my eye
and some healing fluid like salve like tears
ran down and washed all clean and bare

What would I see?
in that reconstructed newness what would there be?

I sat there in the arbor
among the shadows the leaves

There were
grape vines
with their broad easily agitated leaves
and underneath
the knotted threads and strings
and sinews of the vines themselves

Along one wall were trellised roses
yellow roses soft and rich

I leaned back in the wooden seat
it wasn't difficult to rest
for the sun had tired me out that afternoon

And when I closed my eyes
I saw the after-images of suns
drifting yellow spots and dazzling splotches

A flash-bulb after-image
that floated in an undefined black space

And
gradually
an image formed

not of the sun
But luminous
a geometry clarity
a fluid light yet solid

And with the wraith of water
like the smoke of your breath in cold

And then the glare the reflection of sunlight
a blinding luminous white

a piece of ice I'd seen
dripping its melt like rain in the February thaw
the eave drops catching the bright sun

The slightest throb of summer
in the ice
 when for an interval the cold breaks
 the ice thaws partially
 breaking up
and the icicles depending from the eaves
 will steam and drip
 and thaw in the warm sun
No run-off water yet
 there's not been time for that
just minor glistening streams of ice water
 all just that moment thawed

Now everything steams snow banks puddles
 the ice-bound turf
 long-hardened tire tracks
 in the frozen mud

All steams and streams
 glistening and wet
 in the flash of thaw

And yet the air's still cool

 though by comparison it has to feel warm

A virtual heat wave you might think when everyone comes
 out from winter clothes
going with jackets open hats off no gloves no scarves
 who lately were like mummies
so wrapped you couldn't tell one person from the next in
 snow storm or clear weather but only knew their clothes

But all that's cast aside all suddenly irrelevant

as though there'd never been a winter here at all

all open lightened easy once again

And at this moment I walk in the warm air
(as it feels to me)

no gloves or scarf or hat my jacket opened to the breeze
across the quad in bright
sunlight and glittering ice water puddles

And I am going with my boots untied
perhaps I'll kick them off entirely

The sun comes into me new warmth comes into me
the air still cool yet warm enough
and if not warm enough I make it warm
moving in the momentary thaw
in the bright prefiguration of spring

The ice throbs in my hand

Warmth of the sun flows into me
and flows

Into the ice which melts
And then is water
and then vapor

Rising --
white smoke in the sunny cold

The sun
puts out its Word

And everything hears the sound

The heavens echoing

they are a ringing bell

And the sound is light

A light came into my room

a winter sunlight without warmth

It was a glare reflected from the ice and snow outside

A cold light through the frozen glass

which rang like a champagne glass struck lightly
like a Tibetan prayer bowl

and then I couldn't see

There were just circles of yellow light darkened
like rings of flash-bulb after-blindness

I felt like I was blacking out

The world was woozy and unreal

And there was this light around me

And within the quiet crystal of that room composed of light

It flowed

and I could hear it passing with a streaming sound
I felt a penetrating warmth come forth

then cold was like a whisper in my ear

I didn't breathe or need to breathe

A flame poured down into my open throat
a blue and opal-colored flame
like burning alcohol or lighter fluid lit

It flowed around the edges of my body
it burned through everything

The walls of outward space were gone
Meaning's powers signs filling burning cooling

the floor the light the light's switch
the pillow's shade of green

space was solid
solid I want to say and laugh
sounds fill the wall pulsations suffused with light

tympanum

I knock and shadow pulses knock back
open wide the curtain

reveal the trees so huge
caging the whole room
seeming to be considering it

four directions of the compass stream
like an oil being poured around the sky

the sun is small
far in its microscopic world

forms and lines burgeon space-time is evacuated
filling again bodies of whatever kind

yet there is only one kind

glisten with tiny flames

The doors of solid substance burning
burned were gone

squares circles triangles like angels light spots
sunspots

blackening out I woke up
waking up I blacked out

I rose falling through the floor ceiling
my mind outside the house somewhere
the floors transparent
the walls were translucent fire

I walked out over streams of molten glass

And passed through

all the substance of the world streamed in me

I was the mountain
I was the mountain raining

and water falling snows cascades

an avalanche of bees buzzing

I was the mountain raining and buzzing

I was the mountain
the world was very small

the little thing I scratched at it then heavy

then smoke

And then I walked out of it

O hear my voice
which comes from where?

Where all things....

But
From the cloister the personal darkness
what can come?

What can come
from this dark room

where I lie awake all night

As I have before
so many nights
or when sometimes I'd rise from bed
and pace the kitchen floor
and sit there at the table

The faucet leaks

Time dripping in the puddles of the sink

Are just now

Like someone on a summer day

Just watching

I sit there Who?

For that is

what he does what one does

O so late at night you watch the window there

At first all darkness a square of black

And no window at all

for nothing is outside

Darkness within and darkness too without

there is no difference either way and so

The window is a sheet of glass (now black)

framed by a casement

fringed with white curtains

And in the bedroom

likewise

where I've returned

the window is still dark

I sit here in the darkness

in this room

watch for signs of day

for light

to infiltrate the edges of the blinds

And there is color gradually

although by no perceptible process

the window violet

then polar blue and then a grayish lilac
but glowing

And then a brighter glow
with streaks of pink and orange

and then a yellow glare

The sun gradually with day
and day's activity and power
The question still remaining: Will you go along?

For energy has leaked into the room now in the guise of
light

but quietly
like strength increasing gradually with time
Or time itself
no longer drop by drop
but flowing through in increments

A sparkle

a flare

a fire on the slats of the blinds

The leak a stream

And then the burning river of the day

I got up pulled open the blinds opened up the windows

A room of warm sunlight
all yellow
but not yellow – radiant

The chair by the window glowing in the ambient light
an aura all around
as though I never could have seen it or imagined it before

I reached to touch the back of it
but saw my hand fall short
and touch just empty space

And I fell forward with my head on the chair's lap
(I had it now)

The walls were drifting active vibrant

Did I say empty space?

This space was all warm light
held innumerable fluid planes streams waves

All burning still and moving very slowly

an atmosphere
like honey pouring
and the air like warm champagne
All full of points of energy
a thrilling rushing sensation
that ran through every part of me
This was the feel of time
the beauty of all space
the ardent joy of sunlight

I tried to stand once more
the room still vivid and yet steady
and slowly accepting step by step my presence

And then a sudden break

a door left open

and within there was a darker warmth

I couldn't see inside
my eyes were still seeing the bright sun
the tingly blackout yellow after-images

gradually saw plum-colored shadows

the purple darkness the room

And then at last her form:

Just risen from the bath and

bending forward at the waist

and looking intently
at herself

I stepped back she became all shadows once again

One night in the back yard in deep summer

the night was total darkness

Like an eyelid closed

The complex earth scent
carried on the slightest breeze

Was all I knew

And looking out a ways, I thought --

Are my eyes open? Or have I closed them?

and then --

a spark

another

another

another

another

The merest flake of light
a wake of sparkling points

gone

pure appearance

less than momentary

gone as soon as recognized

Fireflies

lead the eye on deeper into the night
where the garden lay

One Saturday my friend and I sat in the cafe

Activity the activity of day
the general activity
of coming and going doing undoing
of no one type or consequence
but of all types and of all shapes and sorts
having all results
a thousand atoms points of consciousness
amounting to no one collective thing
and yet no longer single or separate

People of all sorts went by the cafe windows
as we sat there amid the discreet jazz
and clink of cup and saucer

The talking in the room amid our conversation
a flow of energy
in the context of that place and time
the many currents in confluence all around
of other conversations (all going on at once)
of traffic noise of cars and buses

shouts in the street
of radios
music players a thousand conversations more
tires and brakes trucks shifting gear
a hundred cars a thousand cars ten thousand cars

exhaust from cars
and walkers browsers hurries
collected at street corners
or dispersed on the park green

And later for us
the gallery of modern art

Cool and quiet cooler than the park

More quiet than the mind itself

Moving
Through its corridors its galleries its rooms
And rooms following
leading on to other works
More paintings more exhibits

We wondered
can there be a labyrinth of beauty?

And then a panel or a large portal

The foreground a bright room

The sunny yellow paint that glows like real light

A radiance all but bewildering

There is a sense of life lived there in that space

The open window and the chair nearby

that yet shines
 glances through it
 past it
 around it

consider the eyelids then

 the eyes now closed delicate
 the skin
 an opal pink playing
in those realms of color that it has

It is a medium of light, the skin
 touched now with visible warmth

Or then the mouth
 or the softly throbbing places near the throat

The throat itself for words
 which are the evidences of the mind
the shoulders narrow, graceful
 and then the slender arms

The pale pink nipples like crinkled rose petals
 pink and slight
these an evidence that this in itself
 is not all
 cannot be all
but something must come after it
 living beyond it in a new time
carrying its beauty there made new again
 inexhaustible beauty, undying beauty

Then there too across the chest the vascular flush
 that moves as with a spreading warmth

ardent acquiescence
adrift in that special medium
as though a dream
twilight consciousness
and dream

how you desire this but why exactly?
the inner petals orchid-like

feelings are
what are they?

a fluid and glittering substance
like to a fountain of
iridescent foam spattered

beautiful the vial broken
and overflowing
running like streams
along the contours of that body

erotic flower
spread naked to the star filled night
yet folded as though in dream

Searching out radiance
I went along the shore
to see the hollowed bowls
the newly filled up pools

The smallest thing I wanted -- a fragment of the sea

the water is so clear when framed in rock
the rock

through the sunny pane of water, luminous

too clear and shallow to reflect
what can it be but water?

no more than water and no less

There's plenty more where that came from

for here the sea is the Pacific

from here there is just water
mile after mile of tropic sea

murmuring in calms of indigo midnight

with only a breathing swell

And in the noon the blue the blue-green bright fields

white foam and silver sparkle

Endless

advancing

in the running wind

and then the days of gale and typhoon

then the still

burning calms The "hot and copper sky"

The mind moves into the tropic sea

which is the sea of idea concepts

the shaping spirit

moving in the currents

of language dream and thought to find out

at last reality

But still there is the sea itself

"When gliding by the Bashee isles we emerged at last upon
the great South Sea..."

the Mariner's nightmare,
its sinister whisper:

"Consider the subtleness of the sea;
how its most dreaded creatures glide
underwater...treacherously hidden
beneath the loveliest tints of
azure...Consider...the
universal cannibalism of the sea...."

And the dream, the visionary circles of his friend:

"...not only do they believe that the stars are isles,
But that far beyond all visible
horizons, their own mild,

uncontinented seas interflow with
the blue heavens; and so form the
white breakers of the milky way."

Although he had not yet had glimpse of the terrifying god
the actual, unfathomable reality

The waves act on each other they pile up
uncountable acts which then
disrupt themselves in surf and rocky shallows
or dissipate in foam and weeds slopped on the sand
in a day the weeds are rank
then dried stiffened and caked

In this way therefore
the sea becomes the beach gradually

I went along the beach that day
looking for a fragment of the sea

But in the bright sun
radiance was scattered all before me

-- the sea of sparkling light
each grain of sand, diamond --

Looked out on troughs of diamonds

waves of opal light impossible to look at

Burning

infinitesimal light and time

And then this flowed away

a wave had washed it back into the sea

the sea was water once again an infinite blue field

burning in the energy of noon

The clarity of space this afternoon

as all of sunlight fills the summer's world

the light impalpable without substance

pure and clear

now designates the realms of space

apparent to the eye

the vast geometries of light

transparent half-perceived

and changing in the processes of day

as I walk here just at this very time

luminous time

and burning luminous space

space of all spaces

inclusive creating more

active living space empty and holy emptiness

creating allowing forgetting

the sun now gently warm upon my shoulder
the bright blue sky
the luminous white clouds slowly passing

And light is now a virtual part of thought

a plenitude of life the activity in which
one lives and breathes and moves about

a plenitude of being and nonetheless fluidity

changing
and a part of this free and open space

It is a kind of ambience empowerment
each breath each step

an energy dispersing
regathering to itself

articulating time
moving forms implicit in the day
these forms through which I move
beginning the expression of this change

Living Time

in this actual light and space

Luminous day transcendent therefore

Infinite

And radiant space time

Fleeting recurring endless uncontained

full of powers seen unknown

And this is the actual plum

it is not a metaphor
here there are no metaphors

it is not the sexual plum
or an emblem for the body's hidden life

It is the plum itself

but yet it draws the eye the hand
and finally the mind

I become myself in tasting it

and it remains itself
exposed ripped open though it is
for it always is concealed nonetheless

like the body's hidden life
Concealment is the essence of the flesh

without that there can be no life
and yet it must be known however deep it hides

without that likewise there can be no life

I sit beneath the tree the noon is quiet, warm

the wind sound in the leaves the only sound
the shadows keep me from the July sun

Nonetheless
I bite and draw the juice out of this plum

a juice that is spiked with heady dreams

Now seven o'clock in the evening and late August

the day is falling
and the sunset is red-orange aslant

the cornfield

The cornfield ripples and foams
in the evening wind

how subtly it is never still
The perceptible heat of sunset burns my face

the roadside grass is tinted
and full of small shadows

At times
I have to turn away when the field blurs
in the strong light

near-blindness before the glare

And in the sunset's orange tint
the green stalks of the corn
are lacquered emerald

the blond corn silk glows a copper-gold

The wind blows on the field

like a fire billowing

I feel its waves of heat

Then shadows rippling through the corn
are its waves passing
radiated from the sun
out through the waves of cornstalks

Suddenly

A bird rises from the field

against the sun
it loses outline and is gone

a flake of ash

Bursting from a furnace blown

from a fire aloft

Fluttering incandescent

and melting in the air

What will the cornfield be

Without fire
beneath the nacre of the moon?

That night I went out by myself

Let myself out the back door

quietly so as not to wake the others still asleep

I eased the screen door shut
and stepped out on the dark back porch steps

The chill and damp night air cold September

sweet and clear

I breathed up toward the sky

my breath a windowpane

of smoke I was like
an icicle in spring thaw

The back porch steps were slippery with hoar-frost
and the grass was white with icy dew

walking through it wet my shoes

my feet were chilled

and gradually my toes stung with the cold
I went out through the back yard moving across the lot
the moon above me as I went

The moon was full and white

And shining on the silent road
and on the dark hills and black fields

Here everything was silent the night completely still
My footsteps were so loud with the crunch and rasp of
gravel

A loose stone kicked from underfoot
shot like a tiddlywink

across the road
bounced and clinked
with a sound like a dropped coin

The autumn moon shone down
fluorescent white and silvery white
and ringing in the silence

Like a bell

In the moonlight the cornfield was black stubble

charred sticks in rows cinders of a fire

A field of charcoal complex ashes
burned looking plowed earth

with the moon above

Over all the blue moonlight
I lay down in the grass
the cold wet soaked my back and then

I felt its cold seep into me
I wiped my hands on the thick grass
and rubbed the icy water on my face

freezing myself out of my life

I lay a while there looking up at stars

that slowly turned

in a region of darkness
The earth seemed gradually to drift

At moments I felt that I was staring up
at scattered sparks of light moving like a dance
become geometry
the fabled music that one reads about

--And yet I heard it faintly --

and then became dance again endlessly

I felt the earth as a single thing beneath me
both large and small
unlimited and finite
full of powers and yet desolate

known and unknown always

The sun at noon it is intolerably bright

I walk outside Where is the fire?

there must be fire somewhere for this heat

But no
It was the end of summer

and cicadas simmer in the field which is burning itself out

And on the road every particle of sand
is like a particle of light so many particles of light

I am so fearfully made

What must it be my hand against the sun X-rayed?

I almost see the bones

just as soldiers did at the Bikini atoll blast

Not the infinite

but the intricate is fear itself

And hatred is a very complex thing

love is always simple but hatred

is infinitely intricate and

The labyrinth of beauty leads one

Finally

To oneself again Becomes oneself again

None may him hide

from death hollow-eyed

Nor from sickness either

his twin brother

The rain came down

repeatedly today

rainy rainy day

Each time it fell

with a heavy drumming sound on the roof

It flooded every gutter
the street itself flowed with gray steams

with a white mist
sometimes with torn-down leaves

there was a kind of frying sound in the gutters

in the air something was getting huge and intent

And yet the street itself gets washed right out
all gets carried in the currents of the rain

Today we stayed indoors
to keep out of the downpour
stayed in these dark rooms
we rent with what we have

Our life our only life

I drifted in the night
thinking of the rain
I did not sleep

in the streaming of the night

I had slept before

and lay there drifting through my own absence
from myself not self yet still self

unmotivated unreflected impartial coming to all

I lay there hidden still unconscious
and my breath was only the slightest stirring

Turning in my sleep amid the sources
bathed in the currents of original sleep

Moving through that place
waxing and waning
in the recurring tide silence in the turning

the absence the blank attunement
Shadows over shadows that was what I was

In this way I dreamed of stillness

in this way I was incarnate peace

The darkness lightened moment by moment

Though as yet I knew no time but lay in that half-dark

Timeless

a nascent and still obscured intelligence

and in that place of twilight
I was as yet an insubstantial being
and without circumstance of self or knowledge

action or activity

And at this early hour one bead of rain --
 depending from the tip of leaf or icy blade of grass
 not yet made glitter in the sun
 as a trembling and crystalline drop
 the virtual diamond that must belie
 its utmost fragility
 has only grey twilight now, the world half-lit

Resurgence gradually comes into me
 but only since I had conceived it first

 Had dreamed my resurrection
 in the darkness
 like a seed in soil
So that the green shoots budding in the dark

 Move upward arching through the flesh
 And break in white blossoms
 flowers of the mind
My many words like petals of incarnate speech

And likewise sunrise gradually erupts
 the slantwise corridors of violet and red are tinting
 everything
The orange and yellow breaking up the ground in which I
 lay
 And darkness silence stillness
 are disrupted in points of new activity

 the paper foldings of the paper world unfold
 realness comes forth

dimensions breathe

I come forth from my sleep and walk out in the
orange obscurity of dawn

I not I myself non-self yet still self

I walk out on the grass still cold and wet and I'm
still cold and wet

And on one side the sun shines on me as I walk along

Awake now and move in the present moment
the light says this to me

I must attend to it alone

There can be no falling off from strength if you do that
powers

powers
powers these alone are good

conserve touch sources elusive
yet available

Move in the current time

the present place
among the powers that gather to this moment

the grass blades

sparkling from the rain

Where is death then? What is it to you now?

But which and how many? metaphors
can keep you in the present
the poise of passing knowledge
the beauty of unhesitating grace?

So many doors that block reality
so many keys to open them

For birth and death must always be dreamed first

And having had the dream
now lay hold to the world through action and activity

And so I know of access to another life
as though I had become deeply willing to believe in it

And so likewise you know another life

I want pure contact but not with any substance or with
any body

I want experience itself but no image of it

To think of neither life nor death but to participate in
this intensity and be
the moving center of these transformations

These transformations that I cannot name but yet suggest

And the intensity which also has no name and can't be
known

except by being touched possessed

heard and seen and felt

AFTERWORD

Encounters With the Author in Taipei

We first made the author's acquaintance at a well-known restaurant in Taipei, the Wysteria Tea House, famous as having been a meeting place for dissident intellectuals in the years of political struggle in Taiwan .

During the recent effort to publish his rather extensive work, we had occasion to discuss aspects of his past and current writing.

Your poetry is quite varied in style and in form. Where do you locate yourself in the overall debate concerning poetic form?

I consider myself an eclectic. The main thing for me is to grasp, mentally, a certain object -- that is, an experience, a scene, an event -- to see it and feel it. Any language that seems to convey the reality of that is good, any which remains merely language, merely words, is for me of no interest, in some cases it is actively negative, in the sense of being obstructive.

A cliché?

Yes or not even a cliché but in a way worse than that. Much of our language obscures the nature of reality. Words in themselves are, in a sense, the enemy of writing. I tell students that all the time. Words most often merely convey the usual accepted social understanding. Writing is for the purpose of grasping reality itself, which is always

something other than the social understanding.

Do you consider yourself a political writer?

All writing is political in the sense of attempting to correct these false social understandings. At times its purpose is to merely reveal with a new freshness, a perceptual freshness, as it were. But even this itself has a certain basic political significance, in the sense that awakened human beings will act and think differently than those who are at rest in the normal tranquilized non-perception that we usually are caught up in.

Does living outside the United States help or hinder your writing?

I think it helps, in general. It is in some ways a very undeveloped culture, yet in other ways it is overbearing. (The US, that is.) There is, for example, a great deal of rather stifling political correctness, as it's called, and to get away from that is itself a positive thing. For a while I had no idea how I would ever get all this material published, especially if you're not there trying to do all the "networking" that is needed, and which I was absolutely terrible at anyway -- worse than terrible, I really had no clue, I still don't, I suppose. And then it came about that you could just do it all by yourself, by means of the internet.

How much material is it? It's quite a lot, it would seem.

Yes, I guess it's about 40 volumes or so. Over 2,000 pages, if you want to measure it like that. I don't know how much it would weigh.

There seem to be many styles represented. Was that

something you consciously strove for?

Yes. I always wanted to be able to represent a wide variety of experiences. My first models for the artist were people such as Picasso, Goethe, Bach -- artists who could work in a very wide range of forms and even use widely different styles. Of course, I can't compare myself to people like that, but it was still a goal, to try many types of things.

What sorts of things are you working on currently?

Well as you know I am trying to get all this existing work published, going through it, touching it up here and there, proofreading, and so forth. After that, I think I might return to some translating work -- Holderlin especially, and some Chinese poets, but don't ask me which ones.

All right, but can you say whether they are modern or classical?

Classical. My favorite is Mung Hao-Ren, actually.

There are many other things to talk about, but perhaps that's a good note to end on for now.

But what were you trying to do in this poem in particular?

This piece was an attempt to use Olson's projective verse in a more Romantic context. It is the first part of a three-part piece called *Triptych*, which we have also published in a single volume.

About the Author

Steven Frattali is an expatriate American writer living in Taipei. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry, totaling over 2,000 pages of work. He is also the author of several critical works, among them *Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost* and *Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism*.

About the Banyan Press of Taipei

The Banyan Press of Taipei was founded in 2008 by Samuel Palmer and Steven Frattali. It plans to publish the work of expatriate Anglophone writers of the Pacific Rim who are working outside the norms of mainstream publishing. The Press does not at this time invite submissions, but it hopes to do so in the future.

